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PIC: SAYANTAN GHOSH

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RED ALERT IN MANY STATES AS MONSOON COVERS ENTIRE INDIA

Southwest monsoon has covered entire country 9 days earlier than usual, bringing rain in Delhi and other northern states

CLOUDBURST IN UTTARAKHAND KILLS THREE

The IMD has issued a red alert for heavy rainfall on June 29 and 30 in Uttarakhand, including Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Haridwar and Nainital. Authorities have put the Chardham yatra on hold for a day for the safety of pilgrims. A cloudburst in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi early Sunday left three construction workers dead | P8

SHIMLA-KALKA RAIL LINE SUSPENDED

- Services on the Shimla-Kalka rail line — a UNESCO world heritage — were suspended on Sunday after boulders and trees fell on the tracks following overnight rains in Solan. A bridge was also washed away
- Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, which has been experiencing rainfall since Sunday morning, is likely to receive heavy rain till July 2

June 26

IN 2020 WAS THE LAST TIME MONSOON HAD ARRIVED EARLIER THAN USUAL

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Maharashtra govt rescinds orders on 3-language policy

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

THE Maharashtra government on Sunday decided to rescind the decision to introduce Hindi as a third language in primary schools, a move that was panned by opposition parties as part of 'Hindi imposition'.

Announcing the decision on Sunday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said: "The state cabinet has decided to withdraw the Government Resolutions issued in April and June regarding the implementation of the three-language policy from Class 1."

Following the announcement, the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) cancelled their protest march planned on July 5 against the earlier government orders on teaching Hindi in primary schools.

Fadnavis said a committee headed by economist and writer Narendra Jadhav will be formed to study the three-language formula and submit a detailed report on whether it can be implemented in primary schools. Till then, the government orders about introducing Hindi as a third language stand cancelled, he said.

"The decision of third language policy was accepted by former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray as it was recommended by scientist Raghunath Mashelkar. One Shiv Sena (UBT) member even said that Marathi, English, and Hindi should be made mandatory up to graduation level," Fadnavis said, adding Uddhav wanted to implement the recommendations but later took a U-turn.

Uddhav dismissed the claim, saying he had appointed a study group on Mashelkar panel suggestions, but the group did not hold even a single meeting

Meanwhile, political observers said the move might dent Fadnavis' image as he would now been seen as buckling under pressure.

Relatives of the deceased mourn the deaths in Puri; people gather near chariots of Lord Jagannath during the annual 'Rath Yatra' in Puri, Odisha, on Sunday | PTI

Three crushed in stampede at Puri

Several injured in incident near Gundicha temple; tragedy when trucks entered crowded area

RAJ KUMAR MOHANTY & ASISH MEHTA @ Puri/Bhubaneshwar

THREE devotees, including two women, were killed and six others suffered injuries when a stampede occurred in front of Gundicha Temple in Puri here in the wee hours on Sunday. After chariot-pulling was completed as part of Rath Yatra, all three chariots were parked in front of the temple when the tragedy took place around 4.20 am. The temple is significant for being the destination of the annual Rath Yatra.

Two of the victims died on the spot, while the third succumbed in a hospital. Six more injured have been admitted to the district headquarters hospital, Puri Collector Sidharth Shankar Swain said.

The deceased were identified as Basanti Sahu (36) of Bolagarh, Pravati Das (45) from Balipatna and Prema Kant Mohanty (78) from Khurda. The incident took place when the morning 'pahada' lifting (opening for darshan) rituals had just begun leading to a sudden rush of devotees to catch a glimpse of the deities on the chariots.

The gathering in front of Lord Jagannath's chariot Nandighosa swelled and amid the push and pull, people started falling over each other.

Eyewitness accounts said two trucks entered the area to unload the ladder parts for fixing the chariots to facilitate pahandi of the deities to the Gundicha temple. Devotees had to squeeze themselves to pave the way for the vehicles and the tragedy occurred.

Expressing anguish over the incident, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi sought forgiveness from devotees of Lord Jagannath for the loss of lives. He also directed a probe by Development Commissioner Anu Garg and announced a compensation of ₹25 lakh each for kin of the deceased persons. P5

Collector, SP shunted

Just after the tragedy, Puri collector Siddharth Shankar Swain and SP Vinit Agrawal were transferred, while DCP Bishnu Pati and Commandant Ajay Padhi were suspended for the serious lapses

Guv condoles deaths

Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati on Sunday expressed grief over the death of three persons in the crush. Kambhampati said on X: "Saddened by tragic loss of lives in the unfortunate stampede at Saradhabali"

Rly reservation chart to be out 8 hours ahead of departure

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

AS part of its efforts to ease passenger comfort, the rail ministry is planning to release reservation charts eight hours prior to a train's departure. Currently, the charts are released four hours before the scheduled departure. The new system is expected to come into effect from next month.

Early preparation and release of charts will help passengers on waitlisted tickets know their status early enough to make alternative arrangements in case of non-confirmation.

The decision follows a series of meetings between railway officials and Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on how to improve ticket booking and travel convenience for passengers.

"To improve travel uncertainty, the rail ministry has proposed the new time frame to release the reservation chart, most likely to be implemented by July 1 or a few days late as it requires some technical modification in the system," said a senior official, adding OTP-based authentication for Tatkal bookings will start on July 1.

PM talks of K'buragi rotti in Mann Ki Baat, orders spike

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @Kalaburagi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi, during his Mann ki Baat address on Sunday, mentioned Kalaburagi rottis and within hours, the Kalaburagi Rotti Producers Cooperative Society received over 60 orders through Amazon.

The Society, which supports hundreds of women in Kalaburgi district who make jowar rottis, has received orders for 1,000 rottis (60 orders) and the number was only increasing. The Society buys rottis from women self-help groups in different villages of Kalaburagi district and dispatches them through e-commerce platforms.

Ningamma of Nandi Basaveshwara Rotti Kendra at Kotnur village on the outskirts of Kalaburgi city was pleased that the prime minister mentioned Kalaburagi rottis. CONTINUED ON P5

'Kalaburagi Rotti', new flavour of Karnataka

TIGER DEATHS

Villagers took advantage of watchers' stir

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

THE three accused arrested for the death of a tigress and her four cubs took advantage of a protest by forest watchers to lace the cow's carcass with poison that led to the tigers consuming the poisoned meat and dying, sources said.

Forest watchers went on a strike on Monday, protesting against their salaries not being paid over the last few months. In the absence of staff in the forest, the accused -- Madaraja, Kunappa and Nagaraj -- poured poison on the carcass of the cow that had already been killed by the tigers. They knew that the tigers would return to consume the meat two to three days after the kill and waited for their moment. They wanted to avenge the killing of their cow, the sources added.

The arrest of Madaraja, who is the son of a prominent leader in the locality -- Shivanna, has shocked many in the area. P5

EXPRESS READ

Banu to preside over Sahitya Sammelana

Ballari: Booker Prize winner Banu Mushtaq will be appointed president of the 88th Kannada Sahitya Sammelana, to be held in Ballari in December. She is the first Muslim writer to be appointed to this position | P4

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